

1719. 9. 16.  
A  
PHILOSOPHICAL ENDEAVOUR

Towards the Defence of the Being

OF

W I T C H E S

AND

APPARITIONS.

In

A L E T T E R

To the much Honoured,

ROBERT HUNTER, Esq;

---

By a Member of

THE ROYAL SOCIETY.

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L O N D O N,

Printed by J. Grismond for James Collins, at the  
King's Arms in Ivy-Lane. 1666.

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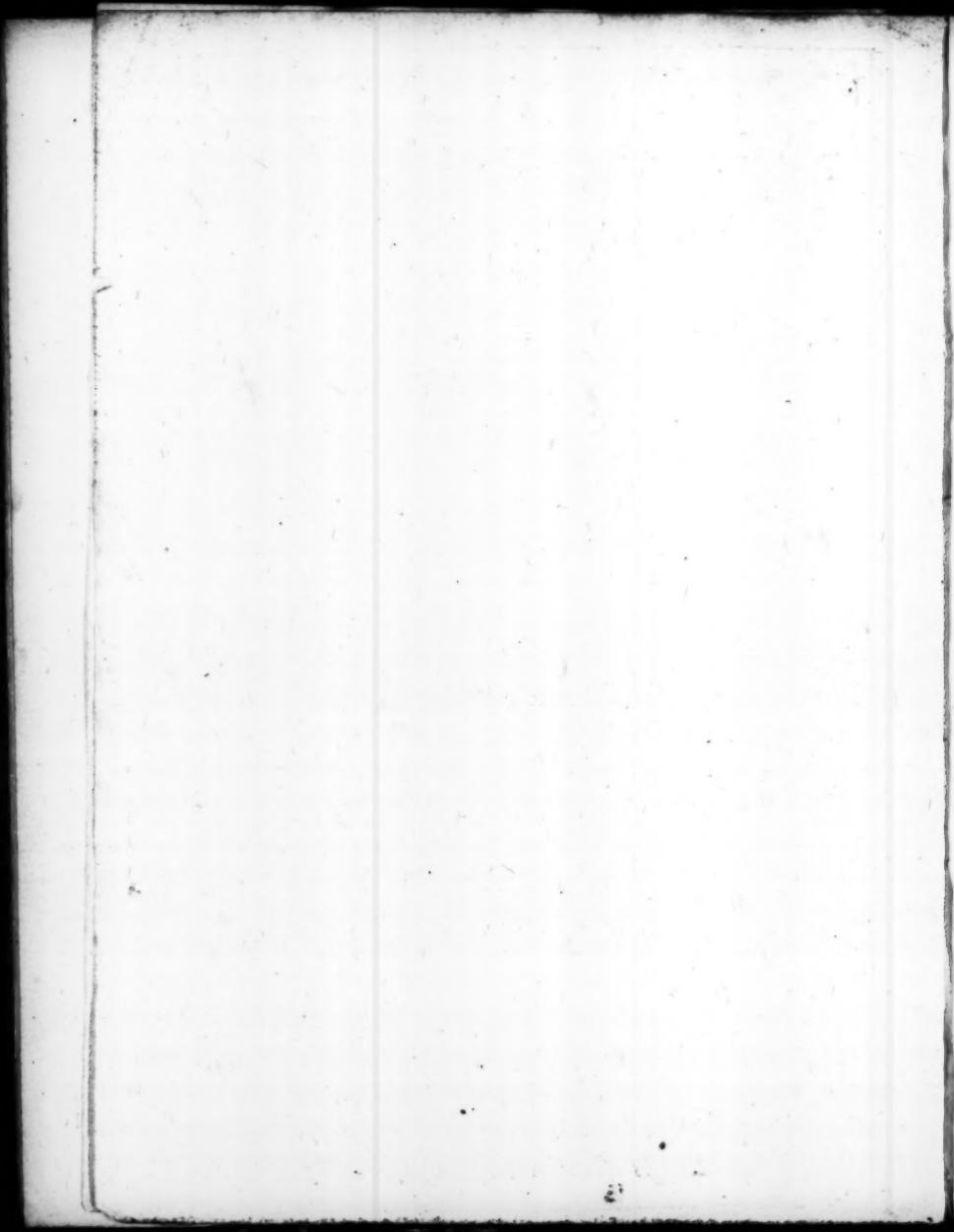
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Some  
CONSIDERATIONS  
About  
*WITCHCRAFT,*

In

*A Letter to the much Honour'd, Robert Hunt  
Esquire.*

SIR,



HE late and frequent dealings  
you have had in the *Exam-  
ination of Witches*, and the Re-  
gards of one that hath a  
very particular and deserved  
Honour for you, have  
brought you the trouble of some *Considera-  
tions* upon the *subject*, in which you have so  
*critically convers'd*, that perhaps may suggest  
to your better thoughts, a way of accounting  
for some of those strange things you have  
been a witness of; and contribute to the *De-  
fence of the Truth of Matters* which you  
know

B

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know by Experiments that could not deceive, against the little exceptions of those that are resolved to believe nothing in affairs of this nature.

If any thing were to be much admired in an *Age of Wonders*, not onely of *Nature* (which is a *constant Prodigy*) but of *Men and Manners*; it would be to me matter of *Astonishment*, that *Men*, otherwise witty and ingenious, are fall'n into the conceit that there's no such thing as a *Witch* or *Apparition*, but that these are the creatures of *Melancholy* and *Superstition*, foster'd by *ignorance* and *design*; which, comparing the confidence of their *disbelief* with the evidence of the *things denied*, and the *weakness* of their *grounds*, would almost suggest, that themselves are an *argument* of what they *deny*: and that so confident an *Opinion* could not be held upon such inducements, but by some kind of *Witchcraft* and *Fascination* in the *Fancy*. And perhaps that *evil Spirit*, whose *influences* they will not allow in *Actions* ascribed to such *Causes*, hath a greater hand and interest in their *Proposition* then they are aware of. For that *subtil Enemy* of *Mankind* (since *Providence* will not permit him to *mischief* us without our own *concurrence*) attempts that by *stratagem* and *artifice*, which he could never

ver effect by open ways of acting; and the success of all wiles depending upon their secrecy and concealment, his influence is never more dangerous then when his agency is least suspected. In order therefore to the carrying on the dark and hidden designs he manageth against our Happiness, and our Souls, he cannot expect to advantage himself more, then by intinuating a belief, *That there is no such thing as himself*, but that fear and fancy make Devils now, as they did Gods of old. Nor can he ever draw the assent of men to so dangerous an assertion, while the standing sensible evidences of his existence in his practices by and upon his Instruments are not discredited and removed.

'Tis doubtless therefore the interest of this Agent of darkness to have the world believe, that the notion they have of him is but a phantasm and conceit; and in order thereunto,

That the stories of *Witches*, *Apparitions*, and indeed every thing that brings tidings of another world, are but melancholick *Dreams* and pious *Romances*. And when men are arriv'd thus far, to think there are no diabolical contracts or apparitions, their belief that there are such *Spirits*, rests onely upon their *Faith* and *Reverence* to the *Divine Oracles*, which

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we have little reason to apprehend so great in such assertors, as to command much from their assent, especially in such things in which they have *corrupt interests* against their evidence. So that he that thinks there is no Witch, believes a *Devil gratis*, or at least upon such inducements which he is like to find himself disposed to deny when he pleaseth. And when men are arrived to this degree of *diffidence* and *infidelity*, we are beholden to them if they believe either *Angel* or *Spirit*, *Resurrection* of the *Body*, or *Immortality* of *Souls*. These things hang together in a *Chain of connexion*, at least in these mens *Hypothesis*; and 'tis but an happy chance if he that hath lost *one link* hold another. So that the vitals of Religion being so much interressed in this subje<sup>c</sup>t, it will not be impertinent particularly to discourse it.

And in order to the proof that there have been, and are *unlawful confederacies* with *evil spirits*, by virtue of which the *hellish accomplices* perform things above their natural powers; I must premise, that this being *matter of Fact*, is onely capable of the evidence of *authority* and *sense*: And by both these, the being of *Witches* and *diabolical contracts*, is most abundantly confirm'd. All *Histories* are full

full of the exploits of those Instruments of darkness, and the testimony of all Ages, not only of the rude and barbarous, but of the most civiliz'd and polis'h'd world, brings tidings of their strange performances. We have the attestation of thousands of eye and ear-witnesses, and those not of the easily deceivable vulgar onely, but of wise and grave discerners, and that when no interest could oblige them to agree together in a common *Lie*: I say, we have the light of all these *circumstances* to confirm us in the belief of things done by persons of despicable power and knowledge, beyond the reach of *Art* and *ordinary Nature*; standing publick *Records* have been kept of these well attested Relations, and *Epocha's* made of those unwonted events. Laws in many Nations have been enacted against those vile practises; those among the *Jews* and our *own* are notorious; such cases have been often determined near us, by wise and reverend *Judges*, upon clear and convictive evidence: and thousands in our *own* Nation have suffered death for their *vile compacts* with *apostate spirits*. All these I might largely prove in their particular instances, but that 'tis not needful, since those that deny the being of *Witches*, do it not out of ignorance of these Heads.

Heads of Argument, of which probably they have heard a thousand times, but from an apprehension that such a belief is absurd, and the things impossible. And upon these presumptions they contemn all demonstrations of this nature, and are hardened against conviction. And I think, those that can believe all *Histories* are *Romances*, that all the wiser world have agreed together to joggle mankind into a common belief of *ungrounded fables*, that the sound *senses* of multitudes together may deceive them, and *Laws* are built upon *Chymera's*; that the gravest and wisest Judges have been *Murderers*, and the sagest persons *Fools*, or *designing Impostors*: I say, those that can believe this heap of absurdities, are either more *credulous* than those whose *credulity* they reprehend, or else have some *extraordinary* evidence of their persuasion, *viz.* That 'tis absurd and impossible there should be a *Witch* or *Apparition*. And I am confident, were those little appearances remov'd, which men have form'd in their fancies against the belief of such things, their evidence would make its way to their *assent*, without any more arguments than what they know already to enforce it. There is nothing then necessary to be done, in order to the establishing the belief I would  
reconcile

reconcile to men's minds, but to endeavour the removal of those prejudices they have received against it, the chief of which I shall particularly deal with; and I begin with that bold Assertion, That

(1) *The notion of a Spirit is impossible and contradictory, and consequently so is that of Witches, the belief of which is founded on that Doctrin.*

To which Objection I answer, (1) If the notion of a Spirit be so absurd as is pretended, that of a God, and a Soul, distinct from matter and immortal, is likewise an absurdity. And then that the world was jumbled into this elegant and orderly Fabrick by chance; and that our Souls are only parts of Matter, that came together we know not whence, nor how; and shall again shortly be dissolv'd into those loose Atoms that compound them; That all our conceptions are but the thrusting of one part of matter against another; and the Idea's of our minds meer blind and casual motions; These and a thousand more the grossest impossibilities and absurdities, consequents of this Proposition, That the notion of a Spirit is absurd, will be sad certainties and demonstrations. And with such

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such Assertors I would cease to discourse about *Witches* and *Apparitions*, and address my self to obtain their assent to truths infinitely more Sacred.

And yet ( 2 ) though it should be granted them, that a *substance immaterial* is as much a contradiction as they can fancy; yet the *Air* and all the *Regions* above us may have their *invisible intellectual Agents*, of *nature* like unto our *Souls*, be that what it will; and some of them at least as much *drgenerate* as the *vilest* and most *mischievious* among *Men*. This, I say, may reasonably enough be supposed, though, as I intimated above, the *Atheist* hath another *chain of consequences*. And this *Hypothesis* will be enough to secure the *possibility* of *Witches* and *Apparitions*: and that all the *upper Stories* of the *Universe* are furnish'd with *Inhabitants*, 'tis infinitely reasonable to conclude from the *analogy of Nature*: Since we see there is nothing so contemptible and vile in the world we reside in, but hath its living creatures that dwell upon it; the *Earth*, the *Water*, the *inferior Air*; the *Bodies of Animals*, the *flesh*, the *skin*, the *entrails*; the *leaves*, the *roots*, the *stalks of Vegetables*; yea and all kind of *Minerals* in the *subterraneous Regions*: I say, all these have their *proper Inhabitants*; yea, I suppose

suppose this Rule may hold in all distinct kinds of bodies in the world, That they have their peculiar *Animals*. The certainty of which I believe the improvement of *microscopical observations* will discover. From whence I infer, That since this little *spot* is so thickly peopled in every *Atom* of it, 'tis weakness to think that all the *vast spaces* above, and *hollows* under ground, are *desert* and *uninhabited*. And if both the *superior* and *lower* *Continents* of the *Universe* have their inhabitants also, 'tis exceedingly *improbable*, arguing from the same *analogy*, that they are all of the *meer sensible nature*, but that there are at least some of the *Rational* and *Intellectual Orders*. Which supposed, there is good foundation for the belief of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, though the *notion* of a *Spirit* should prove *absurd* and *unphilosophical*. And so this first *Objection* comes to nothing. I descend then to the second *Prejudice*, which may be thus formed in behalf of the *Objectors*.

(2) *There are Actions in most of those Relations ascribed to Witches, which are ridiculous and impossible in the nature of things; such are (1) their flying out of windows, after they have anointed themselves, to remote places. (2) Their transformation into Cats, Hares, and other Creatures. (3) Their feeling all the hurts in their own bodies*

bodies which they have received in these. (4) Their raising Tempests, by muttering some nonsensical words, or performing some little ridiculous ceremonies. And (5) their being suck'd in a certain private place of their bodies by a Familiar. These are presumed to be actions inconsistent with the nature of Spirits, and above the powers of those poor and miserable Agents. And therefore the Objection supposeth them performed only by the fancy; and that the whole mystery of Witchcraft is but an illusion of crasie imagination.

But to this Objection I return, (1) in the general, The more absurd and unaccountable these actions seem, the greater confirmations are they to me of the truth of those Relations, and the reality of what the Objectors would destroy. For these circumstances being exceeding unlikely, judging by the measures of common belief, 'tis the greater probability they are not fictitious; For the contrivers of Fictions use to form them as near as they can conformably to the most unsuspected realities, endeavouring to make them look as like truth as is possible in the main Jupposals, though withall they make them strange in the circumstance. None but a fool or mad-man would relate with a purpose of having it believed, that he saw in Ireland, Men with hoofs on their heads, and eyes in their posteriors;

riors; or, if any should be so ridiculously vain, as to be serious in such an incredible Romance, it cannot be supposed that all Travellers that come into those parts after him should tell the same story. There is large field in fiction; and if all those Relations were arbitrary compositions, doubtless the first Romancers would have framed them more agreeable to the common doctrin of Spirits; at least, after these *supposed absurdities* had been a thousand times laugh'd at, people by this time would have learn'd to correct those obnoxious extravagancies; and though they have not yet more veracity than the Ages of Ignorance and Superstition, yet one would expect they should have got more cunning. This suppos'd impossibility then of these performances, seems to me a probable argument that they are not wilfull and disigned forgeries. And if they are Phancies, 'tis somewhat strange that *Imagination* which is the most various thing in all the world, should infinitely repeat the same conceit in all times and places.

But again (2) the strange Actions related of Witches, and presumed impossible, are not ascribed to their own powers; but to the Agency of those wicked Confederates they employ: And to affirm that those evil spirits cannot do that which we conceit impossible, is boldly to stint

the powers of Creatures, whose natures and faculties we know not, and to measure the *world of spirits* by the *narrow* rules of our own *impotent beings*. We see among our selves the performances of *some* out-go the *conceits* and *possibilities* of *others*; and we know many things may be done by the *Mathematicks*, and *Mechanick Artifice*, which common heads think *impossible* to be effected by the *honest* ways of *Art* and *Nature*. And doubtless the *subtilties* and *powers* of those *mischievous Fiends* are as much beyond the *reach* and *activities* of the most *knowing Agents* among us, as theirs are beyond the *wit* and *ability* of the most *rude* and *illiterate*; So that the utmost that any man's reason in the world can amount to in this particular, is onely this, that he cannot *conceive* how such things can be performed; which onely argues the *weakness* and *imperfection* of our *knowledge* and *apprehensions*, not the *impossibility* of those performances; and we can no more from hence form an Argument against them, then against the most *ordinary* effects in *Nature*. We cannot conceive how the *Fetus* is form'd in the *womb*, nor as much as how a *Plant* springs from the *Earth* we tread on; we know not how our *Souls* move the *Body*, nor how these *distant* and extreme

extreme natures are united; And if we are ignorant of the most obvious things about us, and the most considerable within our selves, 'tis then no wonder that we know not the constitution and powers of the Creatures, to whom we are such strangers. Briefly then, matters of fact well proved ought not to be denied, because we cannot conceive how they can be perform'd. Nor is it a reasonable method of inference, first to presume the thing impossible, and thence to conclude that the fact cannot be proved. On the contrary, we should judge of the action by the evidence, and not the evidence by the measures of our fancies about the action. This is proudly to exalt our own opinions above the clearest testimonies, and most sensible demonstrations of fact: and so to give the Lie to all Mankind, rather than distrust the little conceits of our bold imaginations. But yet further,

(3.) I think there is nothing in the instances mention'd, but what may as well be accounted for the Rules of Reason and Philosophy as the ordinary affairs of Nature. For in resolving natural Phænomena, we can only assign the probable causes, shewing how things may be, not presuming how they are. And in the particulars under our Examen, we may give

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give an account how 'tis possible, and not unlikely, that such things (though somewhat varying from the common *rule* of *Nature*) may be acted. And if our narrow and contracted minds can furnish us with apprehensions of the way and manner of such performances, though perhaps not the true ones, 'tis an argument that such things may be effected by creatures, whose powers and knowledge are so vastly exceeding ours. I shall endeavour therefore briefly to suggest some things that may render the *possibility* of these performances *conceivable*, in order to the removal of this *Objection*, that they are *contradictions* and *impossible*.

For the *First* then, That the *confederate Spirit* should *transport* the *Witch* through the *Air* to the place of general *Rendezvous*, there is no difficulty in conceiving; and if that be true which great *Philosophers* affirm concerning the *real separability* of the *Soul* from the *Body* without *death*, there is yet less; for then 'tis easie to apprehend, that the *Soul*, having left its *gross* and *sluggish Body* behind it, and being cloath'd onely with its *immediate vehicle* of *Air*, or more *subtile matter*, may be quickly conducted to any place it would be at, by those *officious Spirits* that attend it.

And

And though I adventure to affirm nothing concerning the *truth* and *certainty* of this *supposition*, yet I must needs say, it doth not seem to me *unreasonable*. And our experience of *Apo-plexies*, *Epilepsies*, *Extasies*, and the strange things men report to have seen during thole *deliquiums*, look favourably upon this *conjecture*; which seems to me to contradict no principle of *Reason* or *Philosophy*, since *Death* consists not so much in the *actual separation* of *Soul* and *Body*, as in the *indisposition* and *unfitness* of the *Body* for *vital union*, as an excellent Philosopher hath made good. On which *Hypothesis*, the *Witches* anno inting her self before she takes her flight, may perhaps serve to keep the *Body* *tenantable* & in fit *disposition* to receive the *Spirit* at its return. These things, I say, we may conceive, though I affirm nothing about them; and there is nothing in such *conceptions* but what hath been affirm'd by men of worth and name, and may seem *fair* and *accountable* enough to those who judge not altogether by the measures of the *popular* and *customary* *opinion*. And there's a saying of a great *Apostle* that seems to countenance this *Platonick opinion*; what is the meaning else of that expression, [*Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell*] except the *Soul* may be *separated* from the *Body*

Body without death; which if it be granted possible, 'tis sufficient for my purpose. And

(2) The Transformations of Witches into the shapes of other Animals, upon the same *supposal* is very conceivable, since then 'tis easie enough to imagin, that the power of *imagination* may form those *passive* and pliable *vehicles* into those *shapes*, with more ease then the *fancie* of the *Mother* can the stubborn *matter* of the *Fætus* in the womb, as we see it frequently doth in the instances that occur of *Signatures* and *monstrous Singularities*; And perhaps sometimes the *confederate Spirit* puts *tricks* upon the *senses* of the *spectators*, and those *shapes* are onely *illusions*.

But then (3) when they feel the *hurts* in their *gross* bodies, that they receive in their *airy vehicles*, they must be supposed to have been *really* present, at least in these latter; and 'tis no more difficult to apprehend how the *hurts* of *those* should be translated upon their *other bodies*, then how *diseases* should be *inflicted* by the *imagination*, or how the *fancy* of the *Mother* should wound the *Fætus*, as several credible relations do attest.

And (4) for their *raising storms* and *tempests*, they do it not, be sure, by their *own*, but by the *power* of the *Prince of the Air*, their *friend* and *allie*,

allie; and the Ceremonies that are injoin'd them, are doubtless nothing else but entertainments for their *imaginings*, and are likely design'd to persuade them, that they do these strange things *themselves*.

And (lastly) for their being *suck'd* by the *Familiar*, I say (1) we know so little of the nature of *Dæmons* and *Spirits*, that 'tis no wonder we cannot certainly divine the reason of so strange an action. And yet (2) we may conjecture at some things that may render it less improbable. For some have thought that the *Genii* (whom both the *Platonical* and *Christian Antiquity* thought embodied) are re-created by the *reeks* and *vapours* of *humane bloud* and the *spirits* that derive from them. Which supposal (if we grant them bodies) is not unlikely, every thing being *refresh'd* and *nourish'd* by its like. And that they are not perfectly *abstract* from all *body* and *matter*, besides the reverence we owe to the wisest antiquity, there are several considerable arguments I could alledge to render it exceeding probable. Which things supposed, the *Devil's* *sucking* the *Sorceress* is no great wonder, nor difficult to be accounted for. Or perhaps (3) this may be onely a *diabolical* *Sacrament* and *Ceremony* to confirm the *hellish* *covenant*. To which I adde, (4) That

which to me seems most probable, *viz.* That the *Familiar* doth not onely suck the *Witch*, but in the action infuseth some *poisonous ferment* into her, which gives her *imagination* and *spirits* a *magical tincture*, whereby they become *mischievously influential*: and the word *venifica* intimates some such matter. Now that the *imagination* hath a mighty power in *operation*, is seen in the just now mention'd *Signatures* and *Diseases* that it causeth; and that the *fancy* is modified by the *qualities* of the *bloud* and *spirits*, is too evident to need proof: which things supposed, 'tis plain to conceive that the *evil spirit* having *breath'd* some *vile vapour* into the *body* of the *Witch*, it may taint her *bloud* and *spirits* with a *noxious quality*, by which her *infected imagination*, heightned by *melancholy*, and this *worse cause*, may do much hurt upon *bodies* that are *impressive* by such *influences*. And 'tis very likely that this *ferment* disposeth the *imagination* of the *Sorceress* to cause the mentioned *ἀπαρσία*, or *separation* of the *soul* from the *body*, and may perhaps keep the *body* in fit temper for its *re-entry*; as also it may facilitate *transformation*, which, it may be, could not be effected by *ordinary* and *unassisted imagination*.

Thus we see 'tis not so desperate to form an  
appre-

apprehension of the manner of these odde performances; and though they are not done the way I have describ'd, yet what I have said may help us to a conceit of the possibility, which sufficeth for my purpose. And though the Hypothesis I have gone upon will seem as unlikely to some, as the things they attempt to explain are to others, yet I must desire their leave to suggest, that most things seem *unlikely* (especially to the conceited and *opinionative*) at first *proposal*; and many great *truths* are *strange* and *improbable*, till *custom* and *acquaintance* have reconciled them to our *fancies*. And I'le presume to adde on this occasion, (though I love not to be *confident* in *affirming*) that there is none of the *Platonical supposals* I have used, but what I could make appear to be *fair* and *reasonable*, to the capable and unprejudic'd.

But I come (3) to another prejudice against the being of *Witches*, which is, That 'tis very improbable that the *Devil*, who is a *wise* and *mighty spirit*, should be at the beck of a poor *Hag*, and have so little to do as to attend the errands of the *impotent lusts* of a *silly old woman*.

To which I might answer, (1) That 'tis much more *improbable* that all the *world* should be *deceiv'd* in *matters of fact*, and *circumstances*

of the clearest evidence and conviction, then that the *Devil*, who is *wicked*, should be also *unwise*; and that he that persuades all his subjects and accomplices out of their wits, should himself act like his own temptations and persuasions. In brief, there is nothing more strange in this objection, then that *wickedness* is *baseness* and *servility*, and that the *Devil* is at leisure to serve those he is at leisure to tempt, and industrious to ruin. And again, (2) I see no necessity to believe that the *Devil* is always the *Witch's confederate*; but perhaps it may fitly be consider'd, whether the *Familiar* be not some *departed humane spirit*, forsaken of God and goodness, and swallowed up by the unsatiable desire of mischief and revenge, which possibly by the *laws* and *capacity* of its *state* it cannot execute *immediately*. And why we should presume that the *Devil* should have the liberty of wandring up and down the Earth and Air, when he is said to be *held* in the *chains of darkness*; and yet that the *separated souls* of the *wicked*, of whom no such thing is affirm'd in any *Sacred Record*, should be thought so *imprison'd*, that they cannot possibly wag from the place of their *confinement*, I know no shadow of conjecture. This conceit I'm confident hath prejudic'd many against the

the belief of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, they not being able to conceive that the *Devil* should be so ludicrous as *appearing spirits* are sometimes reported to be in their *frolics*; and they presume, that *souls departed* never *re-visit* the *free* and *open Regions*; which confidence I know nothing to justify: For since *good men* in their *state of Separation* are said to be *ισάγγελοι*, why the *wicked* may not be supposed to be *ισαίμονες* in the *worst sense* of the word, I know nothing to help me to imagine. And if it be supposed that the *Imps of Witches* are sometimes *wicked spirits* of our *own kind and nature*, and possibly the *same* that have been *Sorcerers* and *Witches* in this life: This supposal may give a fairer and more probable account of many of the actions of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*, than the other *Hypothesis*, that they are always *Devils*. And to this conjecture I'll adventure to subjoyn another, which also hath its *probability*, *viz.* (3) That 'tis not impossible but that the *Familiars of Witches* are a *servile kind of spirits*, of a very *inferior* constitution and *nature*, and none of those that were once of the highest *Hierarchy*, now degenerated into the *spirits* we call *Devils*. And for my part I must confess, that I think the common *division* of *spirits* much too *general*, conceiving it likely there

there may be as great a variety of *Intellectual* creatures in the *invisible* world, as there is of *Animals* in the *visible*: and that all the *superior*, yea, and *inferior* Regions, have their several kinds of *spirits*, differing in their *natural perfections*, as well as in the *kinds* and *degrees* of their *depravities*; which being supposed, 'tis very probable that those of the *basest* and *meanest* Orders are they who submit to the mention'd *servilities*. And thus the *sages* and *grandeur* of the *Prince of darkness* need not be brought into question.

But (4) the opinion of *Witches* seems to some to accuse *Providence*, and to suggest that it hath expoled *Innocents* to the fury and *malice* of *revengeful Fiends*; yea, and supposeth those most *obnoxious*, for whom we might most reasonably expect a more special *tutelary* care and protection, most of the cruel practices of those presum'd *Instruments of Hell* being upon *Children*, who as they least deserve to be deserted by that *Providence* that *superintends* all things, so they most need its *guardian influence*.

To this so specious an *Objection* I have these things to answer. (1) *Providence* is a *Deep unfathomable*; and if we should not believe the

*Phænomena*

Phænomena of our *senses*, before we can reconcile them to our *notions* of *Providence*, we must be grosser *Scepticks* then ever yet was extant. The *miseries* of the *present life*, the *unequal distributions* of *good* and *evil*, the *ignorance* and *barbarity* of the *greatest part* of *mankind*, the *fatal disadvantages* we all are under, and the *hazard* we run of being *eternally miserable* and *undone*; these, I say, are things that can hardly be made *consistent* with that *Wisdom* and *Goodness* that we are *sure hath made*, and *mingled* it self with all things. And yet we believe there is a *beauty*, and *harmony*, and *goodness* in that *Providence*, though we cannot *unriddle* it in *particular instances*; nor, by reason of our *ignorance* and *imperfection*, clear it from *contradicting appearances*; and consequently, we ought not to deny the being of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, because they will create us some *difficulties* in our *notions* of *Providence*. But to come more close, (2) Those that believe that *Infants* are *Heirs of Hell & Children of the Devil* as soon as they are *disclosed* to the world, cannot certainly offer such an *objection*; for what is a little *trifling pain* of a *moment*, to those *eternal tortures*, to which, if they *die as soon as they are born*, according to the *tenour* of this *Doctrin*, they are *everlastingly exposed*? But however the case

case stands as to that, 'tis certain, (3) That Providence hath not secur'd them from other *violences* they are obnoxious too from *cruelty* and *accident*; and yet we accuse *It* not when a whole Townful of *Innocents* fall a *Victim* to the *rage* and *ferity* of *barbarous executioners* in wars and *Massacres*. To which I add, (4) That 'tis likely the *mischief* is not so often done by the *evil spirit immediately*, but by the *malignant influence* of the *Sorceress*, whose *power* of hurting consists in the fore-mention'd *ferment*, which is *infused* into her by the *Familiar*. So that I am apt to think there may be a *power* of *real fascination* in the *Witch's eyes* and *imagination*, by which for the most part she acts upon *tender bodies*. *Nescio quis teneros oculus*— For the *pestilential spirits* being darted by a *spightful* and *vigorous imagination* from the *eye*, and meeting with those that are *weak* and *passive* in the *bodies* which they enter, will not fail to *infect* them with a *noxious quality*, that makes *dangerous* and *strange alterations* in the *person invaded* by this *poisonous influence*: which way of acting by *subtil* and *invisible instruments* is *ordinary* and *familiar* in all *natural efficiencies*. And 'tis now past question, that *nature* for the most part acts by *subtil streams* and *aporhaea's* of *minute particles*, which *pals* from one *body* to another.

another. Or however that be, this kind of agency is as conceivable as any of those qualities ignorance hath call'd *sympathy* and *antipathy*, the reality of which we doubt not, though the manner of action be unknown. Yea, the thing I speak of is as easie to be apprehended, as how *infection* should pass in certain *tenuous streams* through the air from one house to another; or, as how the *biting* of a *mad Dog* should fill all the *bloud* and *spirits* with a *venomous* and *malign ferment*; the application of the *virtue* doing the same in our case, as that of *contact* doth in this. Yea, some kinds of *fascination* are perform'd in this grosser and more sensible way, as by *striking*, giving *Apples*, and the like, by which the *contagious quality* may be transmitted, as we see *diseases* often are by the *touch*. Now in this way of conjecture, a good account may be given why *Witches* are most *powerful* upon *Children* & *timorous persons*, viz. because their *spirits* and *imaginings* being *weak* and *passive*, are not able to resist the *fatal invasion*; whereas men of *bold* *minds*, who have plenty of *strong* and *vigorous* *spirits* are secure from the *contagion*, as in *pestilential* *Airs*. *Clean* *bodies* are not so liable to *infection* as are other tempers. Thus then we see 'tis likely enough that very often the *Sorceress* her self doth the *mischief*; and we know,

*de facto*, that Providence doth not always secure us from one another's injuries. And yet I must confess, that many times also the evil spirit is the *mischievous Agent*; though this confession draw on me another objection, which I next propose:

(5) Then it may be said, that if *wicked spirits* can hurt us by the *direction*, and at the *desire* of a *Witch*, one would think they should have the same power to do us injury without *instigation* or *compact*; and if this be granted, 'tis a wonder that we are not always annoi'd and infested by them. To which.

I return, (1) That the *laws*, *liberties* and *restraints* of the *inhabitants* of the other *world* are to us utterly *unknown*; and this way we can only argue our selves into *confessions* of our *ignorance*; which every man must acknowledg that is not as *immodest* as *ignorant*. It must be granted by all that own the *being*, *power* and *malice* of *evil spirits*, that the *security* we enjoy is *wonderful*, whether they act by *Witches* or not; and by what *Laws* they are kept from making us a *prey*, to speak like *Philosophers*, we cannot tell: yea, why they should be permitted to tempt and ruine us in our *Souls*, and restrain'd from touching or hurting us in our *Bodies*, is a *mystery*.

mystery not easily accountable. But yet (2) though we acknowledge their power to vex and torment us in our bodies also, yet a reason may be given why they are less frequent in this kind of mischief, *viz.* because their main designs are levell'd against the interest and happiness of our Souls, which they can best promote, when their actions are most *fly* and *secret*; whereas did they ordinarily persecute men in their bodies, their *agency* and *wicked influence* would be discover'd, and make a mighty noise in the world, whereby men would be awaken'd to a more suitable and vigorous opposition, by the use of such means as would engage *Providence* to rescue them from their *rage* and *cruelties*, & at last defeat them in their great purposes of *undoing us eternally*. Thus we may conceive that the *security* we enjoy may well enough *consist* with the *power* and *malice* of those *evil spirits*; and upon this account we may suppose that *Laws* of their own may prohibit their *unlicens'd injuries*, not from any *goodness* there is in their *Constitutions*, but in order to the more *successful* carrying on the *projects* of the *dark Kingdom*; as *Generals* forbid *plunder*, not out of *love* to their *Enemies*, but in order to their own *success*. And hence (3) we may suppose a *Law* of *permission* to hurt us

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us at the instance of the *Sorcereſ*, may well stand with the *polity of Hell*, since by gratifying the wicked person they encourage her in malice and revenge, and promote thereby the main ends of their *black confederacy*, which are to propagate *wickedness*, and to ruine us in our *eternal interests*. And yet (4) 'tis clear to those that believe the *History of the Gospel*, that *wicked spirits* have vex'd the bodies of men, without any *instigation* that we read of; and at this day 'tis very likely that many of the *strange accidents* and *diseases* that befall us, may be the *infliction of evil spirits*, prompted to hurt us only by the delight they take in *mischief*. So that we cannot argue the improbability of their hurting *Children* and others by *Witches*, from our own *security and freedom* from the *effects of their malice*, which perhaps we feel in more instances then we are aware of.

But (6) another *prejudice* against the *belief of Witches*, is, a *presumption* upon the *enormous force of melancholy and imagination*, which without doubt can do *wonderful things*, and beget *strange persuasions*; and to these causes some ascribe the *presum'd effects of Soreery and Witchcraft*. To which I reply briefly, and yet I hope sufficiently;

(1) That

(1) That to resolve all the *clear* circumstances of *fact*, which we find in well attested and confirm'd Relations of this kind, into the power of *deceivable imagination*, is to make fancy the greater *prodigy*, and to suppose, that it can do *stranger feats* then are believed of any other kind of *fascination*. And to think that *pins* and *Nails*, for instance, can, by the power of *imagination* be convey'd within the skin, or that *imagination* should deceive so many as have been witness'd in *objects of sense*, in all the circumstances of *discovery*; this, I say, is to be infinitely more *credulous* then the assertors of *Sorcery* and *Demonaick contracts*. And by the same reason it may be believ'd, that all the *Battels* and *strange events* of the world, which our selves have not seen, are but *dreary* and *fond imaginations*, and like those that are fought in the *clouds*, when the *braine* of the *deluded spectators* are the *onely Theatre* of those *fancied transactions*. And (2) to deny evidence of *fact*, because *their imagination* may deceive the *Relators*, when we have no reason to think *so* but a bare presumption, that there is no such thing as is related, is quite to destroy the *credit* of all *humane testimony*, and to make *all men liars* in a larger sense then the *Prophet* concluded in his *haste*. For not *onely* the *melancholick*

cholick aand the fanciful, but the grave and the sober, whose judgments we have no reason to suspect to be tainted by their *imaginings*, have from their own knowledg & experience made reports of this nature. But to this it will possibly be rejoin'd, the *Reply* will be another prejudice against the belief I contend for, *viz.*

(7) That 'tis a suspicious circumstance that *Witchcraft* is but a *fancy*, since the persons that are accus'd are commonly *poor* and *miserable* *old women*, who are overgrown with *discontent* and *melancholy*, which are very *imaginative*; and the persons said to be *bewitch'd* are for the most part *Children*, or people very weak, who are easily imposed upon, and are apt to receive *strong impressions* from nothing: whereas were there any such thing really, 'tis not likely, but that the more *cunning* and *subtil desperado's*, who might the more successfully carry on the *mischievous designs* of the *dark Kingdom*, should be oftner engaged in those *black confederacies*, and also one would expect effects of the *hellish combination* upon others then the *innocent* and the *ignorant*.

To which *Obje&tion* it might perhaps be enough to return (as hath been above suggested) that nothing can be concluded by this and

and such like arguings, but that the *policy* and *menages* of the *instruments* of *darkness* are to us *altogether unknown*, and as much in the *dark* as their *natures*, mankind being no more *acquainted* with the *reasons* and *methods* of *action* in the other world, then poor *Cottagers* and *Mechanicks* are with the *intriques* of *Government* and *reasons* of *State*. Yea peradventure (2) 'tis one of the great *designs*, as 'tis certainly the *interest*, of those wicked *Agents* and *Machinators*, industriously to hide from us their *influences* and *ways* of *acting*, and to work, as near as is *possible*, *incognito*; upon which supposal 'tis easie to conceive a reason, why they most commonly work by, and upon the weak and the ignorant, who can make no *cunning observations*, or tell *credible tales* to detect their *artifice*. Besides (3) 'tis likely a *strong imagination*; that cannot be *weaken'd* or *disturb'd* by a *busie* and *subtil ratiotination*; is a necessary *requisite* to those wicked performances; and without doubt an *heightned* and *obstinate fancy* hath a great influence upon *impressive spirits*; yea, and as I have conjectur'd before, on the more *passive* and *insceptible* bodies. And I am very apt to believe, that there are as *real communications* and *intercourses* between our *spirits*, as there are between *material agents*; which *secret influences*, though *but*

though they are unknown in their nature, and ways of acting, yet they are sufficiently felt in their effects: for experience attests, that some by the very majesty and greatness of their spirits, discover'd by nothing but a certain noble air that accompanies them, will bear down others less great and generous, and make them sneak before them; and some by I know not what stu-pifying virtue, will tie up the tongue, and confine the spirits of those who are otherwise brisk and voluble. Which thing supposed, the influences of a spirit possess'd of an active and enormous imagination, may be malign and fatal where they cannot be resisted, especially when they are accompanied by those poisonous reaks that the evil spirit breaths into the Sorceress, which likely are shot out, and applied by a fancy heightned and prepared by melancholy and discontent. And thus we may conceive why the melancholic and envious are used upon such occasions, and for the same reason the ignorant, since knowledge checks and controls imagination; and those that abound much in the imaginative faculties do not usually exceed in the rational. And perhaps (4) the Dæmon himself useth the imagination of the Witch so qualified for his purpose, even in those actions of mischief which are more properly his; for it is most probable, that

that *spirits* act not upon *bodies* immediately, and by their *naked essence*, but by *means proportionate* and  *suitable* in *instruments* that they use; upon which account likely 'tis so strictly required, that the *Sorceress* should believe, that so her *imagination* might be more at the *devotion* of the *mischievous Agent*. And for the same reason also *Ceremonies* are used in *Incantments*, *viz.* for the begetting this *diabolical faith*, and heightning the *fancy* to a degree of *strength* and *vigour* sufficient to make it a fit *instrument* for the design'd performance. And these I think are *reasons of likelihood* and *probability*, why the *bellish confederates* are mostly the *ignorant* and the *melancholick*. To pass then to another prejudice.

(8) The frequent *impostures* that are met with in this kind, beget in some a belief, that all such *relations* are *forges* and *tales*; and if we urge the evidence of a *story* for the belief of *Witches* or *Apparitions*, they will produce two as *seemingly strong* and *plausible*, which shall conclude in *mistake* or *design*; inferring thence, that all others are of the same quality and credit. But such arguers may please to consider,

(1) That a *single relation* for an *Affirmative*, sufficiently confirmed and attested, is worth a

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thousand tales of forgery and imposture, from whence cannot be concluded an universal negative. So that, though all the Objectors stories be true, and an hundred times as many more such deceptions; yet one relation, wherein no fallacy or fraud could be suspected for our Affirmative, would spoil any Conclusion could be erected on them. And

(2) It seems to me a belief sufficiently bold and precarious, that all these relations of forgery and mistake should be certain, and not one in millions of those which attest the affirmative reality, with circumstances as good as could be expected, or wish'd, should be true, but all fabulous and vain. And they have no reason to object credulity to the assertors of Sorcery and Witchcraft, that can swallow so large a morsel. And I desire such Objectors to consider,

(3) Whether it be fair to infer, that because there are some *Cheats* and *Impostures*, that therefore there are no *Realities*. Indeed frequency of *deceit* and *fallacy* will warrant a greater care and caution in examining, and *scrupulosity* and *shiness* of assent to things wherein *fraud* hath been practised, or may in the least degree be suspected. But, to conclude, because that an old woman's fancy abused her, or some knavish fellows

fellows put tricks upon the ignorant and the timerous, that therefore whole Assizes have been a thousand times deceived in judgments upon matters of fact, and numbers of sober persons have been forsworn in things wherein perjury could not advantage them; I say, such inferrences are as void of reason, as they are of charity and good manners.

But it may be suggested further, (9) That it cannot be imagin'd what *design* the Devil should have in making those *solemn compacts*, since persons of such debauch'd and irreclaimable dispositions as those with whom he is supposed to *confederate*, are pretty securely *his*, antecedently to the bargain, and cannot be more so by it, since they cannot put their *souls* out of *possibility* of the *Divine Grace* but by the *Sin* that is *unpardonable*; or, if they could so dispose and give away themselves, it will to some seem very unlikely, that a great and mighty *Spirit* should oblige himself to such observances, and keep such a do to secure the soul of a silly body, which 'twere odds but it would be *His* though *He* put himself to no further trouble then that of his *ordinary temptations*.

To which *suggestions* 'twere enough to say, that 'tis sufficient if the *thing* be well prov'd,  
F 2 though

though the *design* be not known. And to argue negatively à fine, is very unconclusive in such matters. The Laws and affairs of the other world (as hath been intimated) are vastly differing from those of our Regions, and therefore 'tis no wonder we cannot judge of their *designs*, when we know *nothing* of their *menages*, & so little of their *natures*. The ignorant *looker-on* can't imagine what the *Limner* means by those seemingly *rude lines* and *scrawls* which he intends for the *rudiments* of a *Picture*; and the *Figures* of *Mathematick Operation* are *non-sense*, and *dashes* at a *venture* to one uninstructed in *Mechanicks*. We are in the dark to *one another's* purposes and intendments; & there are a thousand intrigues in our little inatters, which will not presently confess their *design* even to *sagacious inquisitors*. And therefore 'tis folly and *incogitancy* to argue any thing one way or other from the *designs* of a sort of Beings, with whom we so little communicate; and possibly we can take no more aim or guesst at their *projects* and *designments*, then the *gazing Beasts* can do at ours, when they see the *Traps* and *Gins* that are laid for them, but understand nothing what they mean. Thus in general.

But I attempt something more particularly, in order to which I must premise that the

Devil

Devil is a name for a Body Politiek, in which there are very different Orders and Degrees of Spirits, and perhaps in as much variety of place and state, as among our selves; so that 'tis not one and the same person that makes all the compacts with those abused and seduced Souls, but they are divers, and those 'tis like of the meanest and basest quality in the *Kingdom of darkness*; which being supposed, I offer this account of the probable design of those wicked Agents, viz. That having none to rule or ty rannize over within the Circle of their own nature and government, they affect a proud Empire over us (the desire of *Dominion* and *Authority* being largely spread through the whole circumference of degenerated nature, especially among those, whose *pride* was their *original transgression*) every one of these then desires to get him Vassals to pay him homage, and to be employ'd like Slaves in the services of his lusts and appetites; to gratifie which desire, 'tis like enough to be provided & allowed by the *constitution* of their *State* and *Government*, that every wicked spirit shall have those Souls as his *property*, and particular servants and attendants, whom he can catch in such compacts, as those *wild Beasts* that we can take in hunting, are by the allowance of the Law

our

our own ; and those Slaves that a man hath purchas'd, are his peculiar goods, and the vassals of his will. Or rather those deluding Fiends are like the seducing fellows we call *Spirits*, who inveigle Children by their false and flattering promises, and carry them away to the *Plantations of America*, to be servilly employed there in the works of *their* own profit and advantage. And as those base Agents will humour and flatter the simple unwary Youth, till they are on Ship-board, and without the reach of those that might rescue them from their hands : In like manner the more *mischievous Tempter* studies to gratifie, please, and accommodate to those he deals with in this kind, till death hath lanch'd them into the *Deep*, and they are past the danger of *Prayers, Repentance, and Endeavours* ; and then *He* useth them as pleaseth *Him*. This account I think is not unreasonable, and 'twill fully answer the Objection. For though the matter be not as I have conjectur'd, yet 'twill suggest a way how it may be *conceiv'd*, which nulls the pretence, That the *Design* is *inconceivable*.

But then we are still liable to be question'd, (10) how it comes about, that those *proud and insolent Designers* practise in this kind

kind upon so few, when one would expect, that they should be still trading this way, and everywhere be driving on the project, which the vileness of men makes so feasible, and would so much serve the interest of their lusts.

To which, among other things that might be suggested, I return, (1) That we are never liable to be so betrayed and abused, till by our *vile dispositions* and *tendencies* we have forfeited the *tutelary care* and *oversight* of the better Spirits; which, though generally they are our *guard and defence* against the malice and violence of *evil Angels*, yet it may well enough be thought that sometimes they may take their leave of such as are swallowed up by *malice, envy, and desire of revenge*, qualities most contrary to their *Life and Nature*, and leave them exposed to the *invasion* and *solicitations* of those *wicked Spirits*, to whom such *hateful Attributes* make them very *suitable*. And if there be particular *guardian Angels*, as 'tis not absurd to fancy, it may then well be supposed, that no man is obnoxious to those projects and attempts, but onely such whose *vile and mischievous natures* have driven from them their *protecting Genius*. And against this dereliction,

dereliction to the power of evil spirits, 'tis likely enough what some affirm, that the Royal Psalmist directs that Prayer, Psal. 71, 9, 10. *Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.* For— They that keep my soul [ευδοκοῦσσε τὴν τύχην μὲν, as the LXX and the Vulgar Latin, *Qui custodiunt animam meam*] they take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him, persecute him and take him, for there is none to deliver him. But I adde, (2) That 'tis very probable, that the state wherein they are, will not easily permit palpable intercourses between the bad Genii and our nature, since 'tis like enough that their own Laws and Government do not allow their frequent excursions into this world. Or, it may with as great probability be supposed, that 'tis a very hard and painful thing for them, to force their thin and tenuous bodies into a visible consistence, and such shapes as are necessary for their designs in their correspondencies with Witches. For in this action their bodies must needs be exceedingly compress'd, which cannot be well supposed without a painful sense. And this is perhaps a reason why there are so few Apparitions, and why appearing Spirits are commonly in such haste to be gone, viz. that they

they may be deliver'd from the *unnatural pressure* of their tender *Vehicles*, which I confess holds more in the *apparitions of good* than of *evil Spirits*, most Relations of this kind, describing their discoveries of themselves, as very *transient*, (though for those the *Holy Scripture* records, there may be peculiar Reasons why they are not *so*) whereas the *wicked ones* are not altogether so *quick and hasty* in their *Visits*: The reason of which probably is, the great *subtlety* and *tenuity* of the bodies of the former, which will require far greater degrees of *compression*, and consequently of *pain*, to make them *visible*; whereas the latter, are more *fæculent* and *gross*, and so nearer allyed to *palpable consistencies*, and more easily reduceable to *appearance* and *visibility*.

At this turn, Sir, you may perceive that I have again made use of the *Platonick Hypothesis*, *That Spirits are Embodied*, upon which indeed a great part of my Discourse is grounded: And therefore I hold my self obliged to a short account of that supposal. It seems then to me very *probable* from the *Nature of Sense*, and *Analogie of Nature* For (1.) We perceive in our selves, that all *Sense* is caus'd and excited by *motion* made in *matter*; And when those *motions* which convey *sensible impressions* to the

Brain, the Seat of Sense, are intercepted, Sense is lost: So that, if we suppose Spirits perfectly to be disjoyn'd from all matter, 'tis not conceivable how they can have the sense of any thing: For how material Objects should any way be perceiv'd, or felt without vital union with matter, 'tis not possible to imagine. Nor doth it (2.) seem suitable to the *Analologie of Nature*, which useth not to make precipitious leaps from one thing to another, but usually proceeds by orderly steps and gradations: whereas were there no order of *Beings* between us, who are so deeply plunged into the grossest matter, and pure unbodied Spirits, 'twere a mighty jump in Nature. Since then the greatest part of the World consists of the finer portions of matter, and our own Souls are immediately united unto these, 'tis infinitely probable to conjecture, that the nearer orders of Spirits are vitally joyn'd to such Bodies. And so Nature by Degrees ascending still by the more refin'd and subtile matter, gets at last to the pure N̄es, or immaterial minds, which the *Platonists* made the highest Order of created Beings. But of this I have discoursed else-where, and have said thus much of it at present, because it will enable me to add another Reason of the unfrequency of Apparitions and Complaints, viz.

(3.) Be-

(3.) Because 'tis very likely, that these Regions are very unsuitable, and disproportion'd to the frame and temper of their Senses and Bodies; so that perhaps, the Courser Spirits can no more bear the Air of our World, then Batts and Owls can the brightest beams of Day. Nor can the Purer and Better any more endure the noysom steams, and poysinous reeks of this Dunghil Earth, then the Delicate can bear a confinement in nasty Dungeons, and the foul squallid Caverns of uncomfortable Darkness. So that 'tis no more wonder, that the better Spirits no oftner appear, than that men are not more frequently in the Dark Hollows under ground. Nor is't any more strange that evil Spirits so rarely visit us, then that Fishes do not ordinarily fly in the Air, as 'tis said one sort of them doth; or that we see not the Batt daily fluttering in the beams of the Sun. And now by the help of what I have spoken under this Head, I am provided with some things wherewith to disable another Objection, which I thus propose:

(XI.) If there be such an intercourse between Evil Spirits and the Wicked, how comes it about that there is no correspondence between Good Spirits and the Vertuous? since without doubt, these are as desirous to propagate the Spirit and Designes of the upper and better World, as those are

to promote the Interest of the Kingdom of Dark-  
nels.

Which way of arguing is still from our Ignorance of the State and Government of the other World, which must be confess'd, and may, without prejudice to the Proposition I defend. But particularly, I say, (1.) That we have ground enough to believe, that Good Spirits do interpose in, yea, and govern our Affairs. For that there is a Providence reaching from Heaven to Earth, is generally acknowledg'd; but that this supposeth all things to be order'd by the immediate influence, and interposal of the Supreme Deity, is not very Philosophical to suppose; since if we judge by the Analogie of the Natural World, all things we see are carried on by the Ministry of Second Causes, and intermediate Agents. And it doth not seem so Magnificent and Becoming an apprehension of the Supreme Numen, to phancy His immediate Hand in every trivial Management. But 'tis exceeding likely to conjecture, that much of the Government of us, and our Affairs, is committed to the better Spirits, with a due subordination and subserviency to the Will of the chief Rector of the Universe. And 'tis not absurd to believe, that there is a Government runs from Highest to Lowest, the better and more perfect orders of Being, still ruling

ling the inferior and less perfect. So that some one would phancy that perhaps the Angels may manage us, as we do the creatures that God and Nature have placed under our Empire and Dominion. But however that is, That God rules the lower World by the Ministry of Angels, is very consonant to the sacred Oracles. Thus, Deut. XXXII. viii. ix. When the Most High divided the Nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, κατ' αειδυν αγιαν θεον, according to the number of the Angels of God, as the Septuagint renders it; the Authority of which Translation, is abundantly credited and asserted, by its being quoted in the New Testament, without notice of the Hebrew Text, even there where it differs from it, as learned men have observ'd. We know also, that Angels were very familiar with the Patriarchs of old; and Jacob's Ladder is a Mystery, which imports their ministering in the affairs of the Lower World. Thus Origen and others understand, that to be spoken by the Presidential Angels, Jer. L. ix. We would have healed BABYLON, but she is not healed, forsake her, and let us go. Like the Voyce heard in the Temple before the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, Μιαρειανην εντελεσθε. And before Nebuchadnezzar was sent to learn Wisdom and Religion among the Beasts, He fees

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sees a *Watcher*, according to the 70. an *Angel*, and an *holly One come down from heaven*, Dan. IV. xiii. who pronounceth the *sad Decree* against *Him*, and calls it the *Decree of the Watchers*, who very probably were the *Guardian Genii* of *Himself and his Kingdome*. And that there are particular Angels that have the special *Rule and Government* of particular *Kingdomes, Provinces, Cities*, yea and of *Persons*, I know nothing that can make improbable: The instance is notorious in *Daniel*, of the *Angels of Persia and Græcia*, that hindred the other that was engaged for the concerns of *Judæa*; yea, our Saviour *Himself* tells us, that *Children have their Angels*, and the Congregation of Disciples supposed that St. *Peter* had *his*. Which things, if they be granted, the good Spirits have not so little to do with us, and our matters, as is generally believed. And perhaps it would not be absurd, if we referr'd many of the *strange thwarts*, and *unexpected events*, the *disappointments* and *lucky coincidences* that befal us, the *unaccountable fortunes* and *successes* that attend some *lucky men*, and the *unhappy fates* that dog others that seem born to be *miserable*; the *Fame and Favour* that still waits on some without any conceivable *motive* to allure it, and the *general neglect* of others more *deserving*, whose *worth* is not *acknowledg'd*;

I say, these, and such like odde things, may with the greatest probability be resolv'd into the *Conduct* and *Menages* of those *invisible Supervisors*, that preside over, and govern our affairs.

But if they so far concern themselves in our matters, how is it that they appear not to maintain a visible and confess correspondence with some of the better Mortals, who are most fitted for their Communications and their influence? To which I have said some things already, when I accounted for the unfrequency of *Apparitions*; and I now add what I intend for another return to the main Objection, viz.

(2.) That the *apparition* of *good Spirits* is not needful for the *Designes* of the better *World*, whatever such may be for the interest of the other. For we have had the *Appearance* and *Co-habitation* of the *Son of God*, we have *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and the continued *influence* of the *Spirit*, the greatest *Arguments* to strengthen *Faith*, the most *powerful Motives* to excite our *Love*, and the *Noblest Encouragements* to quicken and raise our *desires* and *hopes*, any of which are more than the *apparition* of an *Angel*; which would indeed be a great *gratification* of the *Animal Life*, but 'twould render our *Faith* less noble and less generous, were it frequently so assisted: *Blessed are they that believe, and yet have*

not seen. Besides which, the good Angels have no such ends to prosecute, as the gaining any Vassals to serve them, they being ministering Spirits for our good, and no self-designers for a proud and insolent Dominion over us. And it may be perhaps not impertinently added, That they are not always evil Spirits that appear, as is, I know not well upon what grounds, generally imagined; but that the extraordinary detections of *Murders, latent Treasures, falsified and unfulfill'd Bequests*, which are sometimes made by *Apparitions*, may be the courteous Discoveries of the better, and more benign *Genii*. Yea, 'tis not unlikely, that those *Warnings* that the World sometimes hath of approaching *Judgments* and *Calamities* by *Prodigies*, and sundry odd *Phænomena*, are the kind *Informations* of some of the Inhabitants of the upper World. Thus, was *Jerusalem* forewarned before its sacking by *Antiochus*, by those *Aiery Horsemen* that were seen through all the City, for almost forty days together, 2 Mac V.ii,iii. And the other *Prodigious Portents* that fore-ran its Destruction by *Titus*: which I mention, because they are *notorious instances*. And though, for mine own part, I scorn the ordinary *Tales* of *Prodigies*, which proceed from *superstitious fears*, and *unacquaintance with Nature*, and have been used to bad purposes

poses by the *Jealous* and the *Ignorant*; Yet I think that the Arguments that are brought by a late very ingenious Author, to conclude against such Warnings and Predictions in the whole kind, are *short* and *inconsequent*, and built upon too narrow *Hypothesis*. For if it be supposed, that there is a sort of Spirits over us, and about us, who can give a probable guess at the more *remarkable futurities*, I know not why it may not be conjectured, that the kindness they have for us, and the appetite of fore-telling strange things, and the putting the World upon expectation, which we find is very grateful to our own Natures, may not incline them also to give us some general notice of those uncommon Events which they foresee. And I yet perceive no reason we have to phancy, that whatever is done in this kind, must needs be either *immediately* from *Heaven*, or from the *Angels* by *extraordinary commission* and *appointment*. But it seems to me not unreasonable to believe, that *those officious Spirits*, that oversee our affairs, perceiving some *mighty* and *sad* alterations at hand, in which their *Charge* is much concerned, cannot chuse, by reason of their *affection* to us, but give us some *seasonable hints* of those *approaching Calamities*; to which also their natural desire to *fore-tell strange things to come*, may

contribute to incline them. And by this Hypothesis, the fairest probabilities, and strongest rationalizations against Prodigies, may be made unserviceable. But this onely by the way. I proceed to the next Objection, which may be made to speak thus :

(XII.) The belief of Witches, and the wonderful things they are said to perform by the help of the Confederate Daemon, weakens our Faith, and exposeth the World to Infidelity in the great matters of our Religion. For if They by Diabolical assistance, can inflict and cure Diseases, and do things so much beyond the comprehension of our Philosophy, and activity of common Nature; What assurance can we have, that the Miracles that confirm our Gospel were not the effects of a Compact of like nature, and that Devils were not cast out by Beelzebub? If evil Spirits can assume Bodies, and render themselves visible in humane likeness; What security can we have of the reality of the Resurrection of Christ? And if, by their help, Witches can enter Chambers invisibly through Key-holes, and little unperceived Cranneys, and transform themselves at pleasure; What Arguments of Divinity are there in our Saviour's shewing himself in the midst of his Disciples, when the Doors were slaut, and his Transfiguration in the Mount? Miracles are the great inducements of

Belief, and How shall we distinguish a Miracle from a Lying Wonder; a Testimony from Heaven, from a Trick of the Angels of Hell; if they can perform things that astonish and confound our Reasons, and are beyond all the Possibilities of Humane Nature? This Objection is spiteful and mischievous, but I thus endeavour to dispatch it.

(1.) The Wonders done by Confederacy with wicked Spirits, cannot derive a suspicion upon the undoubted Miracles that were wrought by the Author & Promulgators of our Religion, as if they were performed by Diabolical Compact, since their Spirit, Endeavours and Designes were notoriously contrary to all the Tendencies, Aims and Interests of the Kingdome of Darkness. For, as to the Life and Temper of the Blessed and Adorable JESUS, we know there was an incomparable sweetness in his Nature, Humility in his Manners, Calmness in his Temper, Compassion in his Miracles, Modesty in his Expressions, Holiness in all his Actions, Hatred of Vice and Baseness, and Love to all the World; all which are essentially contrary to the Nature and Constitution of Apostate Spirits, who abound in Pride and Rancour, Insolence and Rudeness, Tyranny and Baseness, universal Malice, and Hatred of Men. And their Designes are as opposite, as

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their Spirit and their *Genius*. And now, Can the Sun borrow its Light from the *bottomless Abyss*? Can *Heat* and *Warmth* flow in upon the World from the Regions of *Snow* and *Ice*? Can *Fire* *freeze*, and *Water* *burn*? Can Natures, so infinitely contrary, communicate, and jump in *projects*, that are *destructive* to each others known *Interests*? Is there any *Balsome* in the *Cockatrice's Egge*? or, Can the *Spirit* of *Life* flow from the *Venome* of the *Asp*? Will the *Prince* of *Darknes*s strengthen the *Arm* that is *stretcht out* to pluck his *Usurp't Scepter*, and his *Spoyls* from him? And will he lend his *Legions*, to assist the *Armies* of his *Enemy* against him? No, these are impossible *Supposals*; No intelligent *Being* will industriously and knowingly contribute to the *Contradiction* of its own *Principles*, the *Defeatnre* of its *Purposes*, and the *Ruine* of its own dearest *Interests*. There is no fear then, that our *Faith* should receive prejudice from the *acknowledgment* of the *Being* of *Witches*, and *power* of *evil Spirits*, since 'tis not the *doing* *wonderful things* that is the *onely Evidence* that the *Holy JESUS* was from *God*, and his *Doctrine* *true*; but the *conjunction* of other *circumstances*, the *holiness* of his *Life*, the *reasonableness* of his *Religion*, and the *excellency* of his *Designes*, added credit to his *Works*, and strengthned the great

great Conclusion, That he could be no other than the Son of God, and Saviour of the World. But besides, I say,

(2.) That since infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* rules the World, it cannot be conceiv'd, that they should give up the greatest part of men to *unavoidable deception*. And if *evil Angels*, by their *Confederates*, are permitted to perform such *astonishing* things, as seem so evidently to carry *God's Seal and Power* with them, for the confirmation of *Falshoods*, and gaining credit to *Impostors*, without any *counter-evidence* to disabuse the World; Mankind is exposed to *fad* and *fatal delusion*. And to say that *Providence* will suffer us to be deceived in things of the greatest concernment, when we use the best of our care and endeavours to prevent it, is to speak hard things of *God*; and in effect to affirm, That He hath nothing to do in the Government of the World, or doth not concern Himself in the affairs of poor forlorn Men. And if the *Providence* and *Goodness* of *God* be not a security unto us against such *Deceptions*, we cannot be assured; but that we are always abused by those *mischievous Agents*, in the *Objects* of *plain sense*, and in all the matters of our dayly Converses. If *ONE* that pretends he is *immediately* sent from *God*, to overthrow the ancient *Fabrick* of *Established Worship*,

*Worship*, and to erect a *New Religion* in *His Name*; shall be born of a *Virgin*, and honour'd by a *miraculous Star*; proclaimed by a *Song* of seeming *Angels of Light*, and *Worshipped* by the *wise Sages* of the *World*; Revered by those of the greatest *austerity*, and *admired* by all for a *miraculous Wisdom*, beyond his *Education* and his *Years*: If He shall *feed Multitudes* with almost *nothing*, and *fast himself* beyond all the *possibilities* of *Nature*: If He shall be *transformed* into the *appearance* of *extraordinary Glory*, and converse with departed *Prophets* in their *visible Forms*: If He shall *Cure* all *Diseases* without *Physick* or *Endeavour*, and *raise the Dead to Life* after they have *stunk* in their *Graves*: If He shall be honoured by *Voyces* from *Heaven*, and attract the *universal Wonder* of *Princes* and *People*: If he shall *allay Tempests* with a *Beck*, and *cast out Devils* with a *Word*: If He shall fore-tell his own *Death* particularly, with its *Tragical Circumstances*, and his *Resurrection* after it: If the *Veil* of the most *Famous Temple* in the *World* shall be *rent*, and the *Sun* *darkened* at his *Funeral*: If He shall, within the time fore-told, break the bonds of *Death*, and lift up his *Head* out of the *Grave*: If *Multitudes* of other departed *Souls* shall *arise* with *Him*, to attend at the *Solemnity* of *His Resurrection*: If He shall after

after Death, visibly converse with, eat and drink with, divers persons, who could not be deceived in a matter of *clear sense*, and ascend in Glory in the presence of an astonisht and admiring Multitude: I say, if such a One as this should prove a *Diabolical Impostor*, and Providence should permit him to be so credited and acknowledged; What possibility were there then for us to be assured, that we are not always deceived? yea, that our very Faculties were not given us onely to delude and abuse us? And if so, the next Conclusion is, *That there is no God that judgeth in the Earth*; and the best, and most likely *Hypothesis* will be, *That the World is given up to the Government of the Devils*. But if there be a Providence that superviseth us, (as nothing is more certain) doubtless, it will never suffer poor helpless Creatures to be inevitably deceived, by the *craft* and *subtilty* of their *mischievous Enemy*, to their undoing; but will without question take such care, that the *works* wrought by *Divine Power* for the Confirmation of *Divine Truth*, shall have such *visible Marks* and *Signatures*, if not in their *Nature*, yet in their *Circumstances*, *Ends* and *Designes*, as shall discover whence they are, and sufficiently distinguish them from all *Impostures* and *Delusions*. And though wicked Spirits may perform some strange things

things that may excite wonder for a while, yet *He bath, and will so provide, that they shall be baffled and discredited;* as we know it was in the case of *Moses and the Egyptian Magicians.*

Now, besides what I have directly said to the *Objection*, I have this to adde to the *Objectors*, That I could wish they would take care of such *Suggestions*; which, if they overthrow not the Opinion they oppose, will dangerously affront the Religion they would seem to acknowledge. For he that saith, *That if there are WITCHES, there is no way to prove that Christ Jesus was not a Magician, and Diabolical Impostor;* puts a deadly Weapon into the *hands of the Infidel*, and is himself next door to the *SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST*: of which, in order to the persuading greater tenderness and caution in such matters, I give this short account.

The Sin against the *Holy Ghost* is said to be *Unpardonable*; by which sad Attribute, and the Discourse of our *Saviour, Mat. XII.* from the xxii. to the xxxiii ver. we may understand its Nature: In order to which we consider, That since the *Mercies of God, and the Merits of his Son, are infinite*, there is nothing can make a Sin *unpardonable*, but what makes it *incurable*; and there is no Sin but what is curable by a *strong Faith,*

Faith, and a vigorous Endeavour: For all things are possible to him that believeth. So that, that which makes a Sin *incurable*, must be somewhat that makes *Faith impossible*, and obstructs all means of Conviction. In order to the finding which, we must consider the ways and methods the Divine Goodness hath taken for the begetting *Faith*, and *cure of Infidelity*: which it attempted, first, by the Prophets, and holy men of ancient times; who, by the excellency of their *Doctrine*, the greatness of their *Miracles*, and the holiness of their *Lives*, endeavoured the conviction and reformation of a stubborn and unbelieving World. But though Few believed their *report*, and men would not be prevail'd on by what they *did*, or what they *said*, yet their *Infidelity* was not hitherto *incurable*, because further means were provided in the *Ministry* of *John the Baptist*, whose *Life* was more *severe*, whose *Doctrines* were more plain, pressing and particular; and therefore 'twas possible that *He* might have succeeded. Yea, and where *He* failed, and could not open mens hearts and their eyes, the *Effect* was still in *possibility*, and it might be expected from *Him* that came after, to whom the *Prophets* and *John* were but the *Twilight* and the *Dawn*. And though *His miraculous Birth*, the *Song of Angels*, the *Journey of*

the *Wise Men of the East*, and the *correspondence of Prophesies*, with the *Circumstances* of the *first appearance* of the *Wonderful Infant*: I say, though these had not been taken notice of, yet was there a further provision made for the *cure of Infidelity*, in his *astonishing Wisdom*, and most *excellent Doctrines*; For, *He spake as never Man did*. And when *These* were despised and neglected, yet there were other *means* towards *Conviction*, and *Cure of Unbelief*, in those *mighty Works* that bore *Testimony of Him*, and *wore the evident marks of Divine Power* in their *foreheads*. But when after all, these *clear and unquestionable Miracles* which were wrought by the *Spirit of God*, and had *eminently his Subscription* on them, shall be ascribed to the *Agency of evil Spirits*, and *Diabolical Compact*, as they were by the *malicious and spightful Pharisees* in the *periods above-mentioned*; when those *great and last Testimonies* against *Infidelity*, shall be said to be but the *Tricks of Sorcery, and Complotment* with *Hellish Confederates*, *This is Blasphemy* in the *highest*, against the *Power and Spirit of God*, and *such as cuts off all means of Conviction*, and *puts the Unbeliever beyond all possibilities of Cure*. For *Miracles* are *God's Seal*, and the *great and last evidence* of the *truth of any Doctrine*. And though, while *these* are *only dis-*  
*be-*

believed as to the *Fact*, there remains a possibility of *persuasion*; yet, when the *Fact* shall be acknowledg'd, but the Power blasphemed, and the effects of the adorable Spirit maliciously imputed to the Devils; such a *Blasphemy*, such an *Infidelity* is *incurable*, and consequently *unpardonable*. I say, in sum, the Sin against the Holy Ghost seems to be a *malicious imputation* of the *Miracles* wrought by the *Spirit of God* in our Saviour to *Satanical Confederacy*, and the power of *apostate Spirits*; Than which, nothing is more *blasphemous*, and nothing is more like to provoke the *Holy Spirit* that is so abused, to an *Eternal Dereliction* of so *Vile* and so *Incurable* an *Unbeliever*.

This account, as 'tis clear and reasonable in it self, so it is plainly lodg'd in the mention'd Discourse of our Saviour. And those that speak other things about it, seem to me to talk at randome, and perfectly without book. But to leave them to the fondness of their own conceits, I think it now time to draw up to a Conclusion of the whole.

Therefore briefly, Sir, I have endeavoured in these Papers, which my respect and your concernment in the subject have made yours, to remove the main prejudices I could think of, against the existence of *Witches* and *Apparitions*:

and I'm sure I have suggested much more against what I defend, than ever I heard or saw in any that opposed it ; whose Discourses, for the most part, have seemed to me inspired by a *lofty scorn of common belief*, and some *trivial Notions of Vulgar Philosophy*. And in despising the *Common Faith* about matters of *Fact*, and fondly adhering to it in things of *Speculation*, they very grossly and absurdly mistake. For in things of *Fact*, the *People* are as much to be believ'd as the most *subtile Philosophers* and *Speculators* ; since here, *Sense* is the *Judge*. But in matters of *Notions* and *Theory*, They are not at all to be heeded, because *Reason* is to be *Judge* of *these*, and *this* they know not how to use. And yet thus it is with those *wise Philosophers*, that will deny the *plain evidence* of the *Senses* of *Mankind*, because they cannot reconcile *apparent diversities* with the *solid Crotches* of a *Philosophy* which they lighted on in the *High-way* by *chance*, and will adhere to at *adventure*. So that I profess, for mine own part, I never yet heard any of the confident *Declaimers* against *Witchcraft* and *Apparitions*, speak any thing that might move a mind, in any degree, instructed in the *generous kinds* of *Philosophy*, and *Nature* of *things*. And for the *Objections* I have received, they are such as rise out of mine own thoughts, which

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which I obliged to consider what was possible  
to be said upon this occasion. For though I have  
examined Scot's *Discovery*, phancying that there  
I should find the strong reasons of mens dis-belief  
in this matter; yet I profess I met not with the  
least suggestion in all that *Farrago*, but what it  
had been ridiculous for me to have gone about  
to *answer*: For the Author doth little but tell  
~~old~~ Fables, and silly Legends, which he confutes  
and laughs at, and pretends this to be a *Confu-*  
*zation of the Being of Witches and Apparitions*:  
In all which, His Reasonings are trifling and  
Childish; and when He ventures at *Philosophy*,  
He is little better than *absurd*: So that 'twill  
be a Wonder to me, if any but Boys and  
*Buffoons* imbibe any *Prejudices* against a Be-  
lief so infinitely Confirmed, from the *Loose*  
and *Impotent Suggestions* of so weak a Dis-  
courser.

And now, Sir, 'tis fit that I believe your pa-  
tience; and I shall do so, when I have said,  
that *You* can abundantly *prove*, what I have  
but attempted to *defend*: And that among  
the many Obligations your Country hath to  
you, for the *Wisdom* and *Diligence* of your  
Endeavours in its service; your *Ingenious In-*  
*dustry* for the *Detecting* of those *Vile Practicers*,  
is

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is not the least considerable. To which I will add no more, but the Confession who it is that hath given you all this trouble; which I know you are ready to pardon, to the respect and good Intentions of

S I R,

Your Affectionate and Oblige

Honourer and Servant,

J. G.

